



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 6



(continued from the last issue)

Brahman is not only the creator, karṭṛ, but also the created object, karma. How can the karṭṛ be the karma also? It is like you scratching your body—the scratcher is you, the scratched is also you. Both the scratcher and the scratched happen to be same person. You are the scratcher from one standpoint, and the scratched from another standpoint. Two standpoints make out of you both the subject as well as the object. This is something peculiar, but tenable. It is something that does not require to be believed. What is said here is, 'All that is here is Brahman'. This is the conclusion. The maker is Brahman, the material is Brahman, and the product, jagat—known and unknown—is non-separate from that Brahman. In fact, the jagat is Brahman.

If you understand Brahman, then you have understood everything. It is possible for you to know Brahman because Brahman remains the same. It has not become many. 'Sir! You are blowing hot and cold here. You said that Brahman is the material cause. So, it must have undergone a lot of changes to become many.' No. Brahman remains the whole without undergoing change, and at the same time, it has become many. How is that possible? When 'something' becomes 'something else', there is no rule that 'something should intrinsically undergo change to become 'something else', like a piece of wood becoming a stone. The piece of wood has undergone so much change; it has fossilised itself to become a solid stone. That kind of a transformation is called pariṇāma. This is one change. It is also true that without any intrinsic change an object can appear to be different, like the gold that has not undergone any intrinsic change to become the chain. The gold, retaining its atomic weight, its original shine, its quality and so on, assumes another form. That form is non-separate from the substance, gold. In fact the chain is gold. Here, without giving up the original form it assumes another form. This change is called vivartta.¹

A more appropriate example, from one standpoint, for vivarta is the rope becoming a snake. The rope has not undergone any change to become a snake.

¹ sva-svarūpāparityāgena rūpāntarāpattiḥ

The rope assuming the form of the snake is only in the seer's mind; it is not there at all in the rope. Without giving up its original form, it appears to the seer to be in another form. When we say Brahman has become all this, we mean that without giving up its original form it has seemingly become many. Because it has no form, Brahman can assume any form by giving its existence and illumination to the other. Its formlessness, in fact, makes this jagat possible. Otherwise it is not possible. Being formless, Brahman can join any name and form.

Any one thing you take, it is Brahman. A guṇa, attribute, has its being in an attribute-free nirguṇa-vastu. If you take a particle, the particalness does not exist in the particle. The particalness exists in the non-particle. The particle is non-separate from that formless vastu which lends its existence to that particle, so that the particle can be a particle. If that vastu has its own attribute, that attribute will condition that particle. This particle is a particle because it draws its existence from non-particle. So all the way, the presence and the concept of the particle are sustained by the same consciousness. That means there is a certain seeming jagat. That is what we call mithyā. For that mithyā jagat, there must be an adequate cause. That adequate cause is Brahman plus mithyā. So, this 'plus' of māyā is not a plus, it is only to account for a non-plus creation. The creation itself is non-plus and a non-plus creation does not require a 'plus' factor. It only requires addition of a non-plus factor to Brahman. That non-plus factor is what is called māyā.

With māyā alone Brahman becomes all-knowledge and all-powerful, and ready for creation. Because it has not undergone any change, 'knowing which everything is known' is possible. Whether you open your eyes or close your eyes, whether you hear something or you do not hear something, all the time Brahman is available as it is, as the invariable in the knower, knowledge and known. That which is invariably present in all three is Brahman. That Brahman is caitanya, which is the knower's nature. If the knower is separate, then Brahman is not everything; it becomes an object, and therefore, inert. But it is not an object. It is cetana; therefore, it includes the knower too. When you know Brahman, then you know that the knower is Brahman. This is how you know Brahman. The knower, known and knowledge are Brahman. Not only that, Brahman itself is the cause for the knowledge. Literally there is nothing outside Brahman. Any concept of outside is only in space, and space is Brahman. So, the cetana creates everything out of itself.

Mantra 7

One may raise a question here. A pot-maker requires some help from outside, like clay, a wheel and so on. Should Brahman too not require some help from outside? No. Brahman does not require any help. That is being said in this famous oft-quoted mantra. A connection by way of objection also can be given for this mantra. How can Brahman be called bhūta yoni, the cause of everything? Everything that we find here has descriptions that are opposed to Brahman. Everything is subject to decline. Everything is an object of the senses and can be objectified. Everything has attributes. We do not see any connection between Brahman and this world. How can Brahman be the cause of all these things? That is being said here.

यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च
यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति ।
यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि
तदाक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम् ॥ १।१।७ ॥
yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhṇate ca
yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti ।
yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni
tadākṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam ॥ 1|1|7||

yathā – just as; ūrṇanābhiḥ – the spider; sṛjate - creates;
ca – and; gṛhṇate – withdraws; yathā – just as;
pṛthiyām – from the earth; oṣadhayaḥ – plants and trees;
sambhavanti – come into being; yathā – just as; sataḥ
puruṣāt – from a living person; keśalomāni – hair on
the head and body (grow); tathā – in the same manner;
akṣarāt – from the Brahman which is akṣara; iha – here;
viśvam – the creation; sambhavati – comes into being.

‘Just as the spider creates and withdraws the web, just as the plants and trees come into being from the earth, just as hair on the head and body grow from a living person, in the same manner, here, the creation (world) comes into being from the imperishable Brahman’.

Yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhṇate ca : Just as a spider creates a thread and takes it back to itself. The example of a spider is given here because in creating the thread, the spider is both the maker and the material. The spider does not

go outside itself for the material. Therefore, it is both causes. The spider does not need to seek outside help; it is adequately equipped to make that web out of itself²

It is very interesting to observe how it creates a web without any external help.

Similarly, Īśvara as the creator does not seek help from somebody. Nor does Īśvara requires a baby-sitter. It is not that he created the world and afterwards sought outside help, like you who, as father or mother, needs a baby-sitter. Then again, just as the spider creates the thread and withdraw it³, Brahman is able to project the jagat and withdraw it also. In fact, Brahman manifests itself in the form of jagat, and it can take back the jagat into itself. "That is why at all levels it is Brahman. You are this Brahman. When you are awake to the manifest jagat, you are Brahman. When you are dreaming you are Brahman. When you are sleeping also, and the whole jagat is resolved, you are Brahman. That is all you have to understand here. Never is there a time when you are non-Brahman. Time itself is Brahman. 'Non-time' is also Brahman. The projected jagat is Brahman, and the collapsed jagat is Brahman. There is some kind of a distinction between the jagat and Brahman, in that the jagat is Brahman, but Brahman is not the jagat. B is A but A is not B⁴. That is why you can know Brahman.

Why is the spider example given here? There is a reason for that. One may object that this world cannot come into being from Brahman because there is no material with Brahman. Being the very self, Brahman is a conscious being. It is not inert. Brahman perhaps can be an intelligent cause, the maker, but it has to find the material for the creation. Therefore, it cannot become the total bhūtayoni. Then it cannot be all-pervasive either. If Brahman is both the maker as well as the material cause, then Brahman is everything and also all-pervasive because the effect is never separate from the material cause. A pot maker, on the other hand, is only the maker and not the material. Therefore, he is not all-pervasive. His pot can go to America, but he remains somewhere near the Kerala border. Wherever the pot goes, however, the clay will go. The clay being the material cause, it pervades the effect. Since there was no material with Brahman before creation nor can caitanyam brahma be the inert material cause, therefore, Brahman cannot be vibhu either.

² यथा लोके प्रसिद्धम् उर्णनाभिः लोताकीटः किञ्चित् कारणान्तरमनपेक्ष्य स्वयमेव सृजते स्व-शरीराव्यतिरिक्तेनैव तन्तून् बहिः प्रसारयति । - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

³ पुनस्तानेव गृह्णते च गृणाति स्वात्मभावमेव अपादयति - मुण्डक भाष्यम्

⁴ B - Role that an actor plays. A - Actor who plays the role.

If the material cause is other than Brahman, then the material cause alone is presented as all-pervasive, and not Brahman. Sāṅkhya philosophy presents pradhāna as the material cause, so pradhāna is considered all-pervasive. Puruṣās, the conscious beings are many. Sāṅkhyās do not accept both causes being one, yet, they cannot say, “We do not accept it because there is no śruti pramāṇa. This mantra reveals the oneness of both causes. If they say, “We will not accept it even if the śruti says so, then we have to meet them on their own ground—the logical ground. Their logic is: ‘We do not see the pot maker making a pot out of himself’. We can give them another example and establish the opposite conclusion. That example is the spider. With this, the Sāṅkhyā logic is demolished. Logic is a donkey. It can take any load.

Some preachers say that one can reach the truth by many ways. They give the example of reaching a temple on the top of the hill. You can trek from all the sides. You can go walking. You can go by helicopter. That is true. But if you want to enter into the temple, there is only one door. In one sentence, you knock off the opponent. It is like the story of the rats and a cat. All the rats came to the conclusion that this cat is menacing. The menace of the cat can be stopped if the rats come to know from a distance when the cat is coming. The cat has a very soft movement. Naturally, the rats always get caught napping. The rats had a conference to find a way to know of the cat’s arrival. After a great deal of brainstorming, one rat suggested that a bell be tied to the neck of the cat so that when it comes, the bell will make a noise and all the rats can go into their holes. Every rat applauded the suggestion and exclaimed, “Wonderful! Great! And so on. Then one old rat got up and said, “Who is ready to bell the cat?” The whole thing falls apart with just one sentence. Similarly, when a logician builds up a big contention, all that is to be done is to make one right statement and the whole thing falls apart. What remains is siddhānta.

We assimilate what the śruti says with the help of logic. Śruti alone is the pramāṇa for us in all these things, so we are not logically establishing the statement of śruti. Śruti makes a statement here that Brahman is both intelligent and material cause. If one thinks that this is not logical due to the absence of an example, well, the śruti gives the spider example to illustrate that Brahman is the material cause also. Before the creation, Brahman alone was there, nothing else being there, like the spider before the creation of the web. So, Brahman is both causes.

(To be continued...)